



SARS

1. What is SARS?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a viral respiratory illness that was first recognized as a global threat in March 2003, after first appearing in Asia in November 2002. Less than 10 SARS cases were reported and treated in the United States. All of these people had traveled to other parts of the world where they were exposed to SARS. There were no cases in Los Angeles County.

2. How do you get SARS?

SARS is spread by close person-to-person contact with someone who has the virus. The most common way to get the illness is when a person with SARS sneezes or coughs. The droplets from an uncovered sneeze or cough can get into other peoples' mouth, nose or eyes. Objects can also be contaminated if touched by hands that have been sneezed or coughed on. Touching contaminated objects can later spread disease from the hands to the mouth, nose or eyes, too.

3. Who is at risk of getting SARS?

No one is likely to be exposed to SARS today. There have been no reported cases of SARS since 2004.

4. How do you know if you have SARS?

Symptoms of SARS include:

- High fever (temperature higher than 100.4° F or 38.0° C)
- Chills and shaking
- Mild headache and body aches
- Dizziness
- Dry cough that may develop after 2 to 7 days
- Diarrhea may occur in some people
- Hard time breathing

5. What problems does SARS cause?

SARS can often cause pneumonia (an infection of the lungs). It can also cause organ failure of the lungs, liver, or heart. When the organs fail they will not work as well as they should or will not work at all.

6. How is SARS treated?

Currently SARS is treated the same way other rare pneumonias are treated. People who receive treatment in time have gotten better.

Call your health care provider first if you experience symptoms. When you go to a health care facility, immediately tell a health care worker that you might be infected so you can receive a mask or be moved to a properly contained area. Identify any areas you have traveled outside the United States within the last 2 weeks. Blood tests and x-rays may be taken. A health care provider will know what type of treatment is best after you have been tested. Your illness may be due to other causes other than SARS.

7. What can be done to prevent the spread of SARS?

The best way to prevent the spread of SARS and most other diseases is frequent hand washing. Use soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Ask people around you to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you plan to travel outside of the United States, visit www.cdc.gov/travel to look for travel alerts or advisories about the country you plan to visit.

Sources

1. SARS. L.A. County Department of Public Health <http://lapublichealth.org/acd/Sars.htm> .
2. SARS. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health – Medline Plus <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007192.htm> .
3. SARS. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/factsheet.htm> .

For additional resources, please dial 211 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov> .